



## **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS**

### **IN THIS CHAPTER**

- 1. Differences between Surveillance Networks and Coalitions**
  - 2. Considerations When Building a Coalition**
  - 3. Traits of Successful Coalitions**
  - 4. Stages in Forming and Developing Coalitions**
  - 5. Create Partnership Opportunities to Share the Message**
  - 6. Building a Communications and Marketing Infrastructure**
- 

#### ***1. Differences between Surveillance Networks and Coalitions***

Building a surveillance network to monitor antimicrobial resistance requires different planning considerations than building a coalition to raise awareness of issues surrounding antimicrobial resistance. Surveillance networks are comprised of similar organizations that share comparable laboratory capacity, personnel and training, resources, missions, and focus. Surveillance network planning issues typically center on the willingness, ability, capacity and appropriateness of commercial, reference and hospital laboratories to participate. On the contrary, public health coalitions are networks comprised of partnerships between various public and private agencies that share common strategic activities. Coalitions emerge from a public health need to develop strategic relationships among related, but not necessarily like organizations to achieve specified goals effectively and efficiently. Like a surveillance network, the formation of a coalition represents an independent entity with its individual mission and goals, separate from

participating institutions' unique missions and goals. Unlike a surveillance network, partners bring to the coalition distinct, often complementing resources which create a broad-scoped organization that addresses health-related issues from a variety of surveillance, prevention and control perspectives.

Public health officials leading prevention and control efforts have demonstrated that developing coalitions can strengthen working relationships among federal, state, and local health departments, voluntary health agencies, and professional organizations. For example, program officials managing activities in the fields of HIV/AIDS, malaria and *Chlamydia trachomatis* (trachoma) have successfully used coalitions to deliver prevention messages and, disseminate control strategies that have helped reduce disease burden while increasing awareness, advocacy, and patient/ provider involvement (1). For example, The Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM) is an alliance of organizations, including WHO's Roll Back Malaria, with a common goal of facilitating international collaboration and cooperation in disease surveillance and research that will lead to the control of malaria. MIM ensures that research and surveillance data are applied to malaria treatment and control. These efforts have fostered international cooperation that maximizes resources, avoids duplication of effort, and facilitates communication among all collaborative coalition partners.

For antimicrobial resistance, having a solid relationship between surveillance data and coalitions' program goals is integral to strengthening a coalition's capacity to communicate the importance of resistance control programs. Coalitions can be used to publicize the burden of resistant infections, the relationship between antibiotic resistance and treatment failures, the need for

improved vaccine utilization and, antibiotic consumption. Prevention messages can be targeted for public health officials, legislators, and the public. Surveillance data can be used to draw a clearer picture of local trends and provide guidance for coalition members when developing program goals, identifying messages for target audiences, and evaluating effectiveness of control programs.

## **2. *Considerations When Building a Coalition***

The Institute of Medicine has called for the use of coalitions in health-related areas to foster local involvement and a sense of ownership that emphasizes local needs and advocates equitable distribution of public resources and complementary private activities as needed by the community. (2) With increased competition for limited funding, the growth of public health coalitions continues to be a practical alternative for healthcare and nonprofit agencies to promote prevention or control programs. Advocates and supporters of a variety of public health issues have formed successful coalitions to increase awareness of their message, share information and resources, unify actions and policies, strengthen efforts to achieve broad-based community-level goals, and to present a cohesive message to the public.

Almost all coalitions will rely upon ongoing cooperation and resource contributions from various institutions. The complex relationships among organizations require meticulous planning during the initial relationship-building process to ensure long-term productive partnerships. Strong emphasis should be placed on establishing open communication channels to define priorities that are consistent with the needs and resources of each group (3). For example, a desire of some individual coalition members to collect more detailed data for surveillance must be balanced

with the overall associated cost, burden of work, and resources required of all coalition members to ensure participation and long-term commitment of all parties.

### **3.     *Traits of Successful Coalitions***

Successful coalitions set goals that are achievable and prove their effectiveness to themselves and their communities through concrete results. (4) This often means that coalitions choose promising projects for success to guarantee early victories that will illustrate to the members and the communities that change can occur. Agreeing upon a short agenda of doable tasks also prevents a coalition from spreading itself too thin.

Coalitions, like all organizations, must be able to handle key organizational issues, such as: leadership, communication, conflict, decision making, staffing and resources. Successful coalitions must be committed to action and advocacy. (5) In order to maintain long-term success, coalitions must share a clear mission, goals and objectives and establish an inclusive membership.

Research conducted to identify shared qualities of successful coalitions has determined effective coalitions typically share these organizational traits: (6)

Efficiency: Joint activity that allows participants to achieve more results with fewer resources.

Flexibility: The organization sets out to accomplish its mission without ties to past organizational history.

Specialization: The partners offer the coalition access to specialized resources such as expertise, space, technology, and materials

Expansiveness: Each of the institutional and individual members has a constituency that adds to the geographic and demographic scope of the coalition

Interdependency: Each element of the coalition needs to rely on the other coalition participants to make the total program successful.

Excitement: Coalition members have the opportunity to network with new people, learn new skills, and develop a new vision.

#### **4. *Stages in Forming and Developing Coalitions***

With coalition networks, as with any complex organization, good systematic planning increases the chances for success. When determining appropriate sites to include in a coalition, leadership must clearly define their program's mission and goals to assure that the identified goals incorporate the self-interests of the various organizations, producing a common good larger than those specific institutional self-interests.

Before contacting potential members, it is important to conduct a thorough assessment of potential partners and the benefits of forming a community-level partnership. This research provides valuable information on the potential compatibility of institutions. It is also helpful to inventory the available resources, expertise, and infrastructure that are available to the coalition.

The coalition building process can be summarized into four general phases. The following stages are useful in planning the appropriate steps for forming and developing new partnerships. (7)

## Stages of Coalition Development

Stages of Coalition Development	What to Expect
<b>Formation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition is young.</li> <li>Strategy is to compete and survive</li> <li>Structure is highly individualized, allows growth within limits of resources</li> </ul>	<p>Some individuals notice need; seek to involve others; look for funding; discuss need for some structure; almost entirely donated or pro bono activity; search for models to follow</p>
<b>Implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition is growing.</li> <li>Strategy is to establish systems, manage the growth, and maintain control.</li> <li>Organization becomes functionally structured.</li> </ul>	<p>Director appointed; steering committee established; action plan developed; review for membership; service provided to target groups; search for funding continues.</p> <p>Needs assessment and program development start; recruitment becomes more proactive; some early results are seen.</p>
<b>Maintenance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition is fully established</li> <li>Strategy is expansion and for some diversification.</li> <li>Structure is fully developed and can exist as full partner with other organizations.</li> </ul>	<p>Program expands; steering committee sets up task forces; regular reports begin to appear; implementation now on regular basis; service is to expand additional venues; monitoring and upkeep of membership a priority; planned activities expanded; communications network in operation.</p>
<b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition has achieved primary goals.</li> <li>Can seek diversification as some services reach the end of the life cycle.</li> <li>Organization may explore 501C3 status.</li> </ul>	<p>Organization reviews and refines structures; evaluation plan implemented; results of evaluation disseminated; search for funding renews. Impact of strategies reviewed; deployment in community more widespread; by-laws, policies, and procedures are solidified; separate corporation explored.</p>

## **5. *Create Partnership Opportunities to Share the Message***

Often, thorough research into current communication strategies employed by other department of health agencies will uncover opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration. By conducting a careful assessment of health bulletins, newsletters, electronic communication updates or list-serves, association meetings and other communication opportunities, surveillance networks may identify opportunities to partner with existing coalitions that share a common target audience or a common message.

### *Key Coalition Member Groups to Consider:*

- Public health practitioners
- Healthcare providers
- Infection Control Professionals
- Microbiology Laboratory Directors
- Professional and voluntary organizations
- Policymakers (from executive and legislative government branches)
- Media
- The public
- Educators

States facing fiscal challenges are using creative ways to partner with other health agencies to utilize resources of the health department, disseminate information on antibiotic resistance and conduct outreach to healthcare providers and consumers.

For example, the Acute Communicable Disease Control Unit of Los Angeles County Health Department has partnered with several other health department agencies to increase utilization of health education publications throughout their target population. By partnering with prenatal outreach projects of the Maternal Child Health Program, communicable disease staff is starting a program that will conduct antibiotic resistance awareness outreach to public health nurses, clinicians and daycare facilities. Major lessons shared from the Los Angeles County experience include:

- Take advantage of opportunities to partner with other Department of Health initiatives
- Utilize local media (i.e., newspapers and television)
- Identify resources in your health department that may assist in promoting your message

Coalitions and community-based partnerships can be important tools for uniting stakeholders with shared interests, combining knowledge and resources and advocating for increased awareness and response to antibiotic resistance issues.

## **6. *Building a Communications Infrastructure***

The communications planning process is crucial to helping the coalition survive and to promote the value of its service. The methods and means a coalition chooses to present itself requires meticulous planning to ensure the message presented accurately conveys the correct mission and facts. For a surveillance program to survive and be useful, a communications plan should initially be developed to raise awareness and increase participation in surveillance efforts. Later communication is critical for disseminating results, maintaining interest in the process, and for disseminating prevention messages.



Traditionally, health professionals have relied upon peer-reviewed journals, newsletters and surveillance reports as the modes of choice for timely dissemination of news and updates. With the technologic advances realized with telecommunication capabilities, a coalition's constituency is able to access a variety of timely, effective and inexpensive modes of communication.

Various electronic means that remain relatively cost effective and have a broad reach include: batch faxing, audio conferencing, and video conferencing. Targeted list serves may also reach potentially large audiences. List serves have a flexible design and may be used as an alternate form of electronic updating (i.e., scheduled emails) or as a more interactive resource by providing user-access to message boards and chat rooms.

Local-level communication infrastructures should also consider incorporating community media and public partners in disseminating their messages of antibiotic resistance or vaccine efficacy (or conversely, lack of coverage) as a means of cost-effectively reaching the general public.

Traditional public relations tools such as press releases, news conferences, press fact sheets, and briefings are primary resources that deliver a message to the public and local community.

Learning to utilize these alternate channels of communication is a very effective way to conserve time and reduce direct personnel effort while ensuring a message is delivered to a wide audience.

For areas with diverse ethnic/ racial demographic compositions, it is important to research and build partnerships with credible and popular media and community organizations that are familiar with cultural preferences target audience members have for accessing and receiving information. Communication techniques must carefully tailor information so that the content is

presented at the appropriate literacy level, packaged in an appropriate manner and disseminated through accepted channels of communication. Plans for dissemination of information should be designed to reach subgroups with a greater need for updates.

The following steps are recommended for coalitions to follow when developing a communication and marketing plan in order to develop a clear and effective communications infrastructure.

#### Step 1: Plan and Select Communications Strategy

- What is the message and image you want to create?
- Who are key audiences you want to target?
- What are the challenges to accurately conveying this message to your target audiences?
- How will you seek funding to continue this activity?

#### Step 2: Select Communication Channels and Materials

- Are there established communication channels to target audiences that are open to partnership opportunities?
- Where is there a need to develop communications channels to reach target audiences?
- What are the most effective tools of communicating with target audience members? (i.e., brochures, PSAs, posters, face-to face consultation, hotline)

#### Step 3: Develop Materials and Pre-Test for Acceptance

- How do focus groups comprised of target audience members evaluate the materials?
- Are focus groups representative of the target audience?

- Are the materials understood, convey the appropriate message, considered useful by the target audiences?

#### Step 4: Implement Communication Plan

- Which staff member will manage the communication plan?
- Should coalition members consider pilot testing prior to full rollout of message?

#### Step 5: Evaluate Communication Plan and Use Feedback for Program Improvements

- What types of survey instruments should be developed to test effectiveness?
- How will these tools be evaluated?
- Who will oversee the evaluation process?
- Is there a need to contract outside evaluation assistance?
- How are the communication efforts received and understood by target audience?
- Are there opportunities to refine the message and improve effectiveness?

### ***References***

1. Breman J and LeDuc, J. International partnerships in infectious diseases research, training, and control. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2001 June; 7(3):542-543.
2. Parker, E, et.al, "Coalition Building for Prevention: Lessons Learned from the North Carolina Community-Based Public Health Initiative," *Journal of Public Health Management Practice*, 1988; 4(2): pp.25-36.
3. From the Ground Up! A Workbook on Coalition Building & Community Development, Gillian Kaye and Tom Wolff, AHEC/Community Partners, June 1, 1997
4. E. Feighery and T. Rodgers, Building and Maintaining Effective Coalitions for Educating and Problem Solving," *Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies*:1993. RC 019 485.

5. Butterfoss, F.D., Goodman R.M., Wandersmann A., "Community Coalitions for Prevention and Health Promotion: Factors Predicting Satisfaction, Participation, and Planning," *Health Education Quarterly*, 1996:23(1): pp.65-79.
6. Eisen A., "Survey of Neighborhood-Based Comprehensive Community Empowerment Initiatives," *Health Education Quarterly*, 1994: 21(2): pp.234-252.
7. Cooley, F., Duncan, A., Burrige J., "Building Coalitions for Education and Problem Solving," *Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies*: 1993. RC 019 485.